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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, September 30, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Grape Pie for Sunday." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics. U.S.D.A.

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Did you ever stop to think of all the many good things you can make with those grapes that right now are hanging out in your arbor or over the back fence--those purple, red, green or white grapes? Grape jelly, grape juice, grape marmalade, grape conserve, grape butter, grape ketchup, pickled grapes, canned grapes--and that's only a start on the grape story.

Think of all the desserts you can make with grapes--grape sherbet, grape flummery, jellied grapes or fruit gelatin pudding made with grape juice. Then you can make grape salads and grape fruit cups and appetizers. Or you can make hot spiced grape juice, a fine beverage for a chilly night. And then you can make grape pie. And that reminds me. I've just had a request for a recipe for grape pie made with Concord grapes. I'm glad I remembered about that for this is just the time to give you the recipe. You get out your pencil and I'll get out the directions and we'll write the recipe down in a safe place for keeps. No, Arabella, this recipe for grape pie isn't in the green cookbook. It's a new recipe, just recently worked out. This is one of those open pies with strips of crust laid criss-cross over the top.

Grape pie takes just six ingredients. You'll need

5 cups of Concord grapes
1 cup of sugar
2 tablespoons of cornstarch
1/8 teaspoon of salt
1 tablespoon of lemon juice, and
Pastry.

Let me go over those again while you check. (Repeat.)

To make the pie, fix the grapes first. Discard the stems, then slip off the skins, and keep them separate from the pulp. Heat the juice and pulp for about five minutes. Then rub the pulp through a sieve to remove the seeds. Combine the sugar, cornstarch and salt. Mix this with the grape pulp and cook it for about five minutes, stirring constantly. Then add the grape skins and the lemon juice. Yes, you use the skins as well as the grape pulp for this recipe. Pour the fruit filling into a pie pan lined with pastry. Cover the top with strips of pastry and bake in a hot oven for thirty minutes.

I prophesy that you will take a large second piece of that pie.

And now that we've brought up the subject of grape pie, I might as well go on and tell you that the Menu Specialist has listed it for dessert for Sunday dinner. Would you like the whole menu right now? All right. A steak Sunday dinner: Broiled steak; Mashed potatoes, browned in the oven; Creamed cucumbers; Pickled beets; Head lettuce salad or just crisp celery; and, for dessert, that good grape pie.

So many housekeepers tell me that the idea of cooking cucumbers is a new one on them that I'd like to take a minute off and mention these creamed cucumbers. You can peel and dice your cucumbers, as you dice potatoes for creaming. Or you can peel and cut them in long sections lengthwise and then crosswise once. Drop the pieces of cucumber into boiling lightly salted water and cook them until just tender. That will be a very few minutes. Then drain the cucumber and pour over it medium thick cream sauce. You can cheer up the appearance of a dish of creamed cucumbers with a dash of red paprika and with chopped green parsley.

There. The dinner is all planned and we can sit back and discuss some of the questions that have been coming in during the last week or so.

The first question is from a lady who says her dill pickles always get soft and mushy before she can use them.

"What," asks this lady, "causes pickles to spoil this way?"

"Bacterial action," answer the specialists.

Perhaps you've noticed that the pickles on top of the crock begin to get soft, if you don't have enough brine to cover them. Those that are exposed above the brine will spoil in a very short time.

Then, if the brine is too weak--contains too little salt, the pickles will spoil just the same way. You'll notice how they get soft and slippery.

So be sure that all your pickles are well below the brine. And be sure you keep the brine at proper strength. Brine gets diluted in different ways. Maybe you have it just right to start with, but the brine draws juice from the cucumbers as they stand and the brine becomes weaker and weaker. So the safe rule is: If you plan to keep pickles more than a few weeks, keep the brine with 15 per cent of salt.

What do you do when the pickles have already become soft and slippery? Unfortunately, no treatment will then restore them to a normal condition. They're spoiled.

While we're on the subject of pickle troubles, we might mention hollow pickles, something housewives are sure to write me about every fall.

What makes pickles hollow in the center? The trouble may be with your method of curing and it may be the fault of the cucumber itself. But hollow pickles needn't be a total loss, as soft pickles are. Though they aren't attractive to serve whole, you can chop them up for mixed pickles and relish.

The specialists say that when a cucumber hasn't developed properly, it may be hollow after pickling. Another trouble may be taking too long a time between gathering the cucumbers and putting them down in brine. Never let cucumbers stand longer than twenty-four hours from the time you bring them in from the garden to the time you put them down in brine.

Hollow pickles often become floaters. Sound cucumbers properly cured do not float. Of course, any condition that lowers the weight of the cucumber will cause it to rise to the surface.

As expert pickle makers know, so-called hard waters aren't good for pickling. Large quantities of calcium in the water or some other salts, found in many natural waters, interfere with normal curing. But often you can offset this alkalinity in the water by adding a small quantity of vinegar.

What about iron in the water? That's bad if the water contains very much of it because it sometimes makes pickles turn black.

Still another pickle question. What makes pickles shrivel, wrinkle and become tough? Answer: Too strong a pickling solution. Shriveling may be the result of placing the pickles immediately into very strong salt or sugar solutions or even in very strong vinegars. If you must use a strong solution in pickling, first get the cucumbers used to it, break them in gradually, by putting them first in a weaker solution.

This shriveling often occurs in making sweet pickles. Too much sugar will cause it.

Just one more question. This is about sauer kraut. Several friends of mine tell me that their sauer kraut has been unsuccessful in recent years.

The specialists say that the most common cause of failure in making sauerkraut is too much salt. The proper quantity is 2 and 1/2 per cent by weight of the cabbage packed. When cabbage is to be fermented in very warm weather, you may use a little more salt, but never more than 3 per cent. And when you apply the salt, see that you spread it on evenly. The red streaks which sometimes appear in sauerkraut come from the uneven distribution of salt.

Monday: "Saving Day Questions."

